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Seventh- and eighth-grade students at Miguel Juarez Middle School in Waukegan recently graduated from the first Junior Police Academy.

The academy, sponsored by the Waukegan Police Department and Nicasa, was a 16-week course made possible through funding from U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk's office.

During the course, students were introduced to police work through instruction in drug enforcement, crime investigation, fingerprinting, gang prevention and evidence processing.

"This was a great opportunity for our department," Waukegan Police Chief William Biang said. "It allowed us to put into action our concern for the community and to take an active role in the lives of youth."